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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes a seminar organized by Great Britain's National Union of Students for Afro-Caribbean and Asian students in nonadvanced further education (FE). The seminar was designed to facilitate a discussion about various aspects of participants' experiences in further education. An introduction provides background, discusses the organization of the seminar, describes participants, and outlines the topics. The transcript of the discussion that follows has been edited, and a commentary is provided. It is organized by the main topic areas: the title of the seminar ("Black Students and FE") and dissatisfaction with it; motivation for entry to FE (the importance of qualifications, parental attitudes, financial consideration); information available about FE before entry (stereotyped career advice, lack of information about FE, a black disadvantage, signs of improvement); the general experience of further education; teaching and staff (teaching and curricula, black staff); racism and anti-racist policy; student unions (college student unions, National Union of Students); impact of FE on individuals; suggested improvements (college/community communications, student input, the National Union of Students); and miscellaneous--the Youth Training Scheme. A conclusion summarizes the discussions at the seminar. Results of the participants' personal profile/questionnaire are appended. (YLB)

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An Occasional Paper

FE CAN REALLY CHANGE YOUR LIFE

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FURTHER EDUCATION UNIT
NATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS

FE CAN REALLY CHANGE YOUR LIFE

The experience of Afro-Caribbean and Asian students in further education

FURTHER EDUCATION UNIT
NATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS

ISBN 0 948621 83 4

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FOREWORD

i) This joint publication by the Further Education Unit and the National Union of Students is based on a seminar held by the NUS, funded by FEU and hosted by the Commission for Racial Equality. The aim of the seminar was to give black students an opportunity to talk about their experience of FE, in order to suggest ways in which colleges can respond effectively to their needs and aspirations.

ii) The text may be found valuable by college management partly because of the evident freedom felt by those present to express themselves. No punches are pulled, and some criticisms—of inadequate marketing, consultation and student support—will be familiar to readers of earlier FEU documents in this field. Some of the messages—about the barriers which young black students face in gaining entry to colleges and the lack of encouragement they receive—should be noted by schools and careers officers as well as by college tutors. Other messages—on the apparent lack of effective implementation of LEA anti-racist/multicultural policies, and the apparent lack of success of marketing and publicity initiatives in reaching the black communities—contain timely reminders to LEAs that there is much still to be done. Other points, on the lack of black teaching staff, or black student perceptions of YTS and on inadequacies in student unions at local and national level, carry implications for national bodies such as DES, MSC and NUS.

iii) Student unions will need to examine their practices to ensure they are receptive to the demands of a diverse population of students and trainees. Employers too, in their role as work experience providers, will have an increasing responsibility to ensure real opportunities and a clear rejection of discrimination in the workplace.

iv) Nevertheless, the main audience envisaged for the document is the FE college; and, in spite of an underlying optimism, there are some disturbing perceptions of apparent segregation in some colleges and lack of awareness of the background of black students in others. The strong feelings which black students have, despite the value they place on experience gained from college, that the college is out of touch with the community, and in particular *their* communities, reinforces earlier evidence from *Black perspectives on FE provision* (FEU, 1985).

v) The implications are complex: the students generally do not make simplistic charges, with the exception of describing the occasional incident, of direct racism. The impression is one of good intentions, frustrated by design problems: designed as white institutions, for a white student body. Colleges are apparently not finding it easy to adapt to a multicultural student body.

vi) Readers who are already aware of this issue, will find none of this surprising. The value which black students place on FE, as a route open to them to gain qualifications which will enable them to overcome discrimination elsewhere, is encouraging. Local consultations with black students, perhaps organised along similar lines to the one described in this document, may help college managers and their students bring difficult issues into the open. There is clearly a fund of goodwill among black students on which colleges can build.

vii) The FEU was pleased to facilitate this consultation, and extends its thanks to NUS and CRE for their collaboration, and to Stuart Edwards, former FE officer at NUS, who edited the transcripts for publication. Any enquiries about the document should be directed to Graham Nicholas, Further Education and Training Officer at NUS*, or to Alan Murray at FEU.

JACK MANSELL
CHIEF OFFICER
FURTHER EDUCATION UNIT

VICKY PHILLIPS
PRESIDENT
NATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS

*National Union of Students, Nelson Mandela House, 461 Holloway Road, London N7 6LT

PREFACE

This is the report of a seminar which was organised by the National Union of Students (NUS) for Afro-Caribbean and Asian students in non-advanced further education. The event was designed to facilitate a discussion in which the participants could talk about various aspects of their experience in further education and have their views recorded in a form that could be made available for publication. The objective was to provide a medium through which ordinary, individual Afro-Caribbean and Asian students could express their interests and concerns to those involved at all levels of the educational policy-making process.

The project received financial support from the Further Education Unit (FEU), and the seminar itself was hosted by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE).

The Research Director was Stuart Edwards, Education Officer (FE) at the National Union of Students. The Transcriber was Peter Walker, and the Student Chairperson was Sam Akinlade, General Secretary of Kingsway-Princeton College of Further Education.

SUMMARY

A seminar was organised by the National Union of Students for Afro-Caribbean and Asian students in non-advanced further education. The objective was to provide them with an opportunity to discuss their experiences and have their views recorded.

Sixteen students took part. Background information was obtained about them by means of a written questionnaire/personal profile. They then took part in a structured discussion which was recorded and transcribed. The transcription has been edited and provided with a commentary to form the basis of this report.

The main issues which emerged in the discussion were as follows:

the sensitivity of the students to issues of language and terminology;

the particular importance of further education to them both as an emancipatory experience in itself, and as a means of obtaining qualifications to help them compete in a racist society;

the inadequacy and stereotyped nature of much of the careers advice and information available before entry to further education;

the tendency for a divide to develop between black and white students in certain aspects of college life;

the domination by white members of staff of positions of authority in colleges and the negative impact of this on the motivation and teaching of black students;

the lack of impact of college and other policies designed to counter racism;

the lack of capacity of college student unions to involve and help ordinary black students, and the gaps between the anti-racist policy of the National Union of Students and its practice;

the potential of further education to transform the lives of black young people and to give them qualifications as a weapon in their struggle to overcome racial prejudice;

the need to improve links between colleges and the community, to give students more say in the running of their colleges through student unions, and for changes to take place in NUS's own handling of issues concerned with race;

the separation of the experience of black young people on the Youth Training Scheme and those on conventional FE courses.

In conclusion the positive potential of further education to transform the lives of young black people has been emphasised. But also there are serious problems which black students face both in gaining access to college and once they arrive. No simple solutions to these problems emerged from the seminar. Nevertheless, it demonstrated the importance of taking serious note of what the students themselves have to say about their own experiences.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The origin of the project went back to the evidence which NUS presented in 1980 to the Swann Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups (then usually referred to as the Rampton Committee). This evidence had two related stages. First, discussions were organised amongst groups of West Indian students in two FE colleges. These were taped and a report based on the transcript was submitted to the Committee. Secondly, as a result of this first submission, NUS was asked to organise a meeting between a group of black students in higher education and members of the Committee. A record and report was made of this meeting also. This evidence contributed to the interim report of the Committee which focused on the experience of West Indian children at school.

With the publication in March 1985 of the Swann Report—*Education for All*—as the final outcome of the Committee's Inquiry, NUS decided that it would be an appropriate time to conduct a similar form of exercise to that which had been used originally to provide evidence for the Committee. Over the intervening period of five years, progress appeared to have been made in certain areas. For example, increasing numbers of colleges and local education authorities had produced policies on multicultural education and/or anti-racism. NUS was concerned to see what, if any, impact these apparent changes at a policy level had had upon the experience of individual students, particularly given the deteriorating situation of black young people in many other respects, such as employment.

NUS is represented on the FEU Multicultural Working Group, which oversees the FEU's initiatives in the field of curriculum development for a multicultural society. From the outset, NUS's proposed project received support and encouragement from FEU staff. It was seen as having the potential to contribute to the four priority areas in which the need for action had been identified by the FEU Board of Management:

(i) raising the awareness of teachers in FE about the potentially dangerous effect of prejudice and discrimination on education

(ii) identifying the support needed by both students and staff in situations when racial prejudice could have a bad effect on education

(iii) appraising culturally-biased curricular practices

(iv) the provision of anti-racist education for all students.

After a process of negotiation, it was agreed that the FEU should provide funding for NUS to carry out a project which would contribute to the research objectives of both organisations in this field. This was to involve the setting up of a single discussion involving some twenty Afro-Caribbean and Asian students enrolled on courses of non-advanced further education at a number of different colleges. The discussion was to be recorded and transcribed so it could be used as the basis of a written report. A list of subject matter was agreed reflecting the particular interests of both organisations.

It was also agreed that the discussion should attempt to elicit information about the positive aspects of the students' experiences as well as the negative aspects. The title chosen for the report—*FE Can Really Change Your Life*—reflects this objective, indicating that there was evidence of the positive potential which FE has to transform the lives of individual Afro-Caribbean and Asian students, despite the negative aspects of their experience which were also revealed. The title is not an exact quotation, but is based on what one of the participants said about what a lecturer told him before he began his course:

'He did say one true thing, this happened to some people more than others. He said, "By the time you finish this course you will be a changed person". I think that is probably true. Going to FE college really changes your life . . .'

Finally, it is important to recognise the limits of the technique used to provide the evidence for this report. Although efforts were made to ensure that the range of participants invited was not unrepresentative, and information was collected to check that this was the case, there are obviously severe limitations imposed by the size of sample necessary for a single discussion. The strength and validity of the technique rests principally on the recording of the authentic experiences of a small number of individuals rather than on any claim to be strictly representative.

Organisation of the seminar

The seminar was hosted by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and took place at their London headquarters on Friday 14 March 1986. The day was divided between a morning and an afternoon session, each of which had a distinct purpose. The morning was essentially an introductory session, during which the context and objectives of the research project were explained to the student participants, and they provided background information about themselves. The afternoon was when the formal group discussion took place, the transcript of which provides the main evidence for this report.

The morning session began with a member of staff from the CRE welcoming the participants and giving a brief introduction to the work of the Commission. Further introductions were made by NUS representatives. Then the participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire. For this they split off into pairs. One half of the questionnaire was called a personal profile and each individual filled this out for him/herself. Then they swapped with their partner, and each of them in turn interviewed the other in order to fill out the second half of their questionnaire. When everybody had done this, each person was asked to introduce their partner to the group as a whole. Finally, they split off into smaller groups for informal preliminary discussions about some of the issues that were to be raised more formally in the afternoon.

The purpose of the questionnaire was twofold. First, the way in which it was filled out was designed as an exercise to relax the participants and get them talking to each other. Secondly, it was a means of collecting necessary background information about the participants. This information is analysed under the separate heading of 'Participants'.

The afternoon session was taken up by the main discussion. This was chaired by the Student Union General Secretary of one of the colleges involved, who is

himself a student of Afro-Caribbean origin. The discussion was structured by means of a written brief which was followed by the chairperson. In addition to the sixteen students and the chairperson, the observers and the research director made contributions at certain points of the discussion. Everything that was said was taken down by the transcriber who produced a full written transcript of the discussion. This was done in such a way as to protect the anonymity of the individual students, but to allow a distinction to be made between whether they were of Asian or Afro-Caribbean origin. The reason for making this distinction was that it was anticipated that there could be significant differences in the experiences of the two racial groupings which would otherwise not be identifiable. It was also asked that the transcript should be set out in such a way as to identify separately the contributions of the chairperson, the reserach director and the observers.

A summary of the chairperson's brief is provided under the separate heading of 'Topics'. An edited account of what was said during the afternoon session is reproduced under the heading of 'The Discussion'.

Participants

Twenty students had been invited from six different colleges spread across three regions of the country: Charles Keene College and Coalville Technical College in the East Midlands; Matthew Boulton Technical College and Warley College of Technology in the West Midlands; and Kingsway-Princeton College and Croydon College in London. Most of the students had been contacted through their student unions. Efforts were made to obtain a balance between Asians and Afro-Caribbeans, and men and women. Also, it was attempted to ensure that students from a wide range of different courses were represented and that there was not a preponderance of those who were highly politically motivated.

One factor which was not taken account of was the overall racial balance of the colleges from which the participants were drawn. It became clear during the seminar that most of the participants came from colleges where there were significant numbers of other Afro-Caribbean and/or Asian students. One of them pointed out during the discussion that the situation of those who were in a small minority in their colleges might be different. This is a valid point. When considering the evidence, it should be taken into account that this is predominantly the experience of Afro-Caribbean and Asian students in colleges where they constitute a significant proportion of the total student body.

Of the twenty students originally invited, fifteen attended the seminar. In addition, there was one late substitute, bringing the total to sixteen. None of the students from Coalville Technical College attended, but there were at least two students from each of the other colleges and at least four from each of the regions.

The full results of the participants' questionnaire/personal profile are set out in the Appendix. The significance of these results is analysed below.

The information obtained about the participants included: their race and gender; their age; their qualifications on leaving school; their course; their reasons for going for college; the extent of their involvement with the college student union; the policies of their colleges on anti-racist/multicultural education; and their reasons for attending the seminar.

Race and gender

The twenty per cent drop-out rate amongst those who were invited had a distorting effect upon the racial and sexual balance intended of the seminar. If all of those who had originally been invited had attended, there would have been an eleven to nine ratio both of Afro-Caribbeans to Asians and of males and females. As it was, there were eleven Afro-Caribbeans and five Asians, and ten males and six females. Of these, seven were Afro-Caribbean males and four Afro-Caribbeans females, three Asian males and two Asian females. Thus, the composition of the non-attenders had the effect of increasing the slight racial and sexual imbalances which existed in the originally intended sample.

The balance of racial and gender representation at the seminar can be regarded as adequate but by no means optimal. There were still at least two students of each sex within each racial grouping. The validity of the technique being used did not depend upon the strict numerical representatives of the group participating.

Age

The age range of the participants was between sixteen and twenty-six. Their average age was eighteen years and eleven months. Ten of them (62.5%) were in the sixteen to eighteen age group, compared with 80 per cent of all full-time and sandwich students in non-advanced further education throughout England.

Qualifications

The qualifications of the participants on leaving school ranged between one 'A' level and six 'O' levels at one end of the scale, and none at all at the other. There was one student with one 'A' level and five or more 'O' levels; five students with five or more 'O' levels and no 'A' levels; five students between one and four 'O' levels, with or without additional CSEs; three students with between one and four CSEs and no 'O' levels (one of these having additional RSA typing and office skills qualifications); and two students with no qualifications.

Courses

The participants were predominantly enrolled on academic rather than vocational courses. Eleven were taking 'O' levels and/or 'A' levels in one form or another. Of these, seven were taking just 'A' levels, two 'O' and 'A' levels, and two just 'O' levels. Two were taking these 'O' and/or 'A' levels as part of a special access provision described as 'Open College Courses'. Five students were on vocational courses. Two of these were Youth Training Scheme trainees at a college-based Training Workshop. Of the other three, one was doing BTEC General, another was doing a BTEC National Diploma in Business Studies and the third an unspecified diploma in Electronic Engineering.

Compared with all students enrolled in non-advanced further education throughout England, the pattern of course enrolment of the participants was by no means typical. Some 25 per cent of all full-time students in the sector are taking 'O' and 'A' levels, whereas more than two-thirds of the participants were. However, the course balance amongst the participants did reflect more accurately the situation amongst black students as opposed to students as a whole.

Reasons for going to college

There was a considerable overlap between the answers to the questions 'Why did you decide to go to college?' and 'What do you intend doing when you have finished your course?'. For this reason they have been merged together.

For half of the participants further education college was primarily a route into higher education. For six others, including the two YTS trainees, it was hoped that it would be a direct route into employment. For the other two, their course was either a step towards another course at a non-advanced level, or a way of filling in time whilst waiting to get on such another course.

A wide range of other reasons were mentioned by either one or two of the participants in their responses to the questionnaire. Most of these were positive reasons: wanting to improve themselves, to help others, to study a particular course, to be with their friends, to meet different people and to enjoy a freer atmosphere. For some, however, it was also the lack of an acceptable alternative: either boredom with school or the lack of any jobs available.

Student union involvement

The participants were given a choice of four categories to describe their level of involvement with the college student union. Seven stated that they were elected officers of some form or another, six that they attended formal meetings, and three that they had no involvement whatsoever. None of them opted for the fourth category which was 'use leisure/social facilities only'. Clearly, there was a higher level of student union involvement than might be expected amongst an average group of further education students. This was probably a reflection of the fact that the participants were contacted largely through student unions. Nevertheless, a wide range of different levels of activity was covered. Moreover, those who were elected officers could claim in another sense to be representative of their ordinary fellow students.

College policies

Eight of the participants stated that their colleges had anti-racist or multicultural education policies, six said that their colleges did not have such policies, and two did not know.

Reasons for attending the seminar

The reason given most often (6) was simply that they were invited or asked to do so. Going beyond this, a number (5) stated that they were curious to find out what the event was about. The same number (5) said that they had been attracted by the opportunity to exchange views with other students in a similar position. Three mentioned that they were interested in finding out more about the work of the Commission for Racial Equality, two that they wanted to know more about how things were run and the representation of ethnic minorities in college management, and one wanted to see how effective the law was in tackling the oppression of black people in Britain. Three expressed, in one form or another, a sense of duty—whether it be to their fellow Asian students, to their students union, to students in general or black people in general. One simply said that he was there because it was known that he liked to talk a lot and this was an opportunity for him to express his views.

Topics

The Chairperson's brief consisted of an outline of the role of the Chair and a series of questions. These questions were divided between the following topic areas:

motivation for entry to further education;

information available about further education before entry;

experience of further education—general
—teaching
—racism
—student unions;

impact of further education on individuals;

suggested improvements;

miscellaneous.

THE DISCUSSION

The transcript of the discussion has been edited and a commentary provided. It is organised in accordance with the main topic areas.

1. The title of the seminar

The seminar was referred to in the programme given to the participants as the 'Black Students and FE Seminar'. At the beginning of the afternoon session, an objection was raised to this title. One of the Asian participants stated:

Something has been bugging me. On the cover of this programme it says, 'Black Students and FE Seminar'. I don't know how anyone else here, and Asian, feels about that. I'm not saying I don't feel bad to be classified as a black student but I do think it is a bit unfair. I want to know why it was put as Black Students and the FE Seminar. Is there any particular reason for that?

This feeling of disquiet was shared by another Asian student:

Most Asians do not tend to regard themselves as being black and should be identified in this situation as being Asian and should have been invited as such.

It was further suggested that the omission of the word 'Asian' from the title might have accounted for the higher drop-out rate amongst those Asian students who had been invited.

These views expressed by Asian participants were not shared by some of the Afro-Caribbean students. They thought that the title 'Black Students and FE' was appropriate, because politically Asians as well as Afro-Caribbeans were considered as black. Furthermore, one of them said that he would object to the term 'ethnic minorities' as an alternative collective description. Also, if separate words were used for Asians and Afro-Caribbeans, it could be argued that further distinctions should be made between Africans and Jamaicans and so on.

In response, the research director explained that it was difficult to find a title which would be satisfactory to everybody. It could be argued that further distinctions should be made between different kinds of Asians as well as different kinds of Afro-Caribbeans in the way that had just been pointed out. The title had been chosen for two reasons. First, the term 'black' was used to describe both Asians and Afro-Caribbeans, and regarded as acceptable, in the literature of the Commission for Racial Equality and the Further Education Unit, which was the body responsible for sponsoring the seminar. Secondly, it was easier and simpler to say 'Black Students and FE Seminar' than 'Afro-Caribbean and Asian Students and FE Seminar'.

At various other points during the afternoon, the students' sensitivity to the terms used to describe their race became evident. In particular, an Afro-Caribbean student referred to an argument that he had had with his lecturers about the word 'ethnic' as used in 'ethnic minorities'.

Personally I have had a long battle over a certain word that people bring up now and again and that I am offended by—ethnic. If you look in the old dictionaries it is a word which means pagan, or people with no moral character whatever. I put my views to a lecturer who went downstairs and had another lecturer bring up about four dictionaries and asked 'What do you like to be called?' I said, 'Black' and he gets out the dictionaries and gives me a load of meaning on this word black. 'Is this black? Is this black?' I said, 'My colour is black'.

Nevertheless, some of the students present at the seminar themselves used the term 'ethnic minorities'. These were mainly the Asian participants. It would seem therefore that there was a tendency for the two different racial groups to have divergent opinions on the question of acceptable terminology. The Afro-Caribbean students generally thought it acceptable to describe both themselves and the Asians as 'black', but some of them were strongly offended by the term 'ethnic minorities'. In contrast, some Asian students did not regard the term 'black' as being applicable to themselves, and some used the term 'ethnic minorities' to describe both themselves and the Afro-Caribbeans.

Obviously this discussion posed certain problems in relation to the choice of a suitable title for this report. It was decided eventually to avoid both the terms 'black' and 'ethnic minorities' and to use a quotation from one of the participants as the basis for the main title, combined with the explanatory subtitle 'The Experience of Afro-Caribbean and Asian Students in Further Education'. The term 'black' has, however, been used as a collective description at various points in the text of the report.

2. Motivation for entry to further education

This was a topic on which preliminary information had already been obtained from the questionnaire filled out by the participants during the morning session. It will be remembered from the analysis provided earlier that for half of the participants FE college was primarily seen as a route to higher education and that for most of the others it was a means of enhancing their job prospects. A wide range of additional reasons was given. The discussion during the afternoon gave emphasis to certain further points.

Why FE college?

Reflecting the trend amongst black students in general, many of the participants were taking academic subjects at FE college which they could also have taken at school or sixth form college. The discussion focused on the reason for this choice.

The most important theme that came out was that of being treated as adults rather than children. This meant two things in particular: having their horizons broadened and being given a sense of responsibility.

. . . with FE colleges there is a wider choice, not only of subjects but of people you meet.

* * *

I wanted to go to a further education college because it gives you a sense of responsibility as well. At school you are pushed into going in to lectures whereas in the colleges it is up to you, it's your responsibility. It broadens your horizons and it strengthens your character.

This experience of being treated as a responsible adult at college was compared favourably with what happened at school, though in the case of the student speaking below there seemed to be a cetain amount of ambiguity about the extent to which she really wished to take responsibility for her own work.

You are dealing with adults rather than little children at school. In the lectures you sit down and you are lectured and it is up to you. When you are at school you just sit down and read comics and they are taken away from you. In colleges it's up to you whether you want to participate in the lessons. You can sit down and snooze away. It is your responsibility more than anything else. With me, I wish I was pushed a bit as well. I find I'm not doing what I should do.

The experience of being pushed at school had not been shared by all the participants and for some this was a matter of complaint. It was their experience that black students at school were sometimes not given the same encouragement as their white peers. FE college was seen as an improvement in this context, not necessarily because it pushed black students more, but because it offered them equal opportunities.

I would just like to remark on that, the case of students being pushed. What I've seen in a few cases, black students in schools aren't really expected to do a whole lot at school. If they go through the 'O' level stage and then go on to sixth form, assuming they pass their 'O' levels, they are not really expected to do very well, not really encouraged. Careers doesn't open up all the aspects to them. The choice of an FE college will take you out of the school environment where you feel you are not being pushed and you go into an FE institute where you expect to be treated more as a person and allowed equal opportunities. You are not really regarded as a lesser student.

Clearly, there were significant differences amongst the participants with regard to their experiences of school—some felt they had been pushed too much, some that they had not been pushed enough. This difference was recognised at the time and a possible explanation was suggested. This was that it might depend on whether the schools were located in predominantly white or black areas.

Doesn't it depend on what area you come from, whether you come from Harborne, which is a white area, or Handsworth which is densely populated, with black members there?

I agree but in my case I didn't go to school in Handsworth, I went in a mainly white area and I still felt that while I was at school much wasn't expected of me so therefore I didn't produce as much as I maybe could have. I think that is a general thing in education. Black students until recently have been regarded as just there to fill in time. They are good at PE and sports.

It might also be noted that it was mainly an Asian student who was complaining of being pushed too much at school whereas it was an Afro-Caribbean student who was complaining of not being given sufficient encouragement. Nevertheless, whatever the differences in their experiences of school, they were united in regarding FE college as a form of emancipation.

For others, FE was less of a positive choice. It was rather the case that they felt it to be their only option. In one case this was because it was only at the FE college that a particular course was available. In another case it was because of the chaos being caused by the reorganisation and amalgamation of the local schools.

You had to go to FE college because the schools in the area were all joining up into one and it was really going badly and many people were failing already, so there was no other choice.

The importance of qualifications

Underlying the specific motivation of the students to attend FE college, there was a more general motivation to extend their education. The results of the written questionnaire indicated the importance which some of the participants attached to the obtaining of qualifications. During the dicussion this point was further emphasised.

. . . being black people in this country we need to have more pieces of paper to wave in their faces than anybody else. You've got to have the relevant qualifications and everything. If you don't have more than the next person who is not black are you going to get the job?

* * *

Supplementary questions were asked about two other factors which might have been expected to have some impact upon the motivation of the students to continue their education at an FE college—the attitude of their parents and financial considerations.

Parental attitudes

When asked directly about the attitude of their parents to them going to an FE college, none of the participants mentioned any problems which they personally had experienced. Those who spoke, either said that their parents had been happy for them to choose as they wished, or that their parents did not properly understand what an FE college was anyway.

However, when they spoke about the experience of other young people that they knew, the situation was sometimes very different. Participants emphasised the lack of support available, in particular for Asian girls, when their wishes were opposed by their parents.

. . . The first hurdle is actually talking to your parents and getting over that.

There is no one, I'm not in such a position because my parents are not so strict in their ideas, but when there is no one you can talk to unless you want to leave home and live in a hostel elsewhere, to get some advice about what to do at home, how to present a fair case to your parents about what you want to do for the rest of your life. It is a whole house full of argument and bedlam. That's what it ends up being. A father can turn round, it happened to a friend of mine, and say, 'If you want to do that, get out of my house.'

This is Asian girls?

Yes.

Perhaps it is not surprising that there was no one at the seminar who could speak first hand about the experience of parental hostility to their educational aspirations. The discussion about financial considerations gave further emphasis to the importance of parental support for those wishing to attend college.

Financial considerations

Most students in non-advanced further education do not receive any form of financial support. Unlike for students in higher education, there are no mandatory awards available. Those awards which do exist are dependent upon the discretion of individual local education authorities. Policies vary greatly throughout the country, but even where awards are available, the amounts involved are usually comparatively small.

The students at the seminar were interested to compare each others' experiences with regard to financial support. The extent to which money was a problem depended upon a number of factors: the extent of parental support; the availability of local authority awards; the opportunities for part-time employment; and the strength of motivation to complete the course and gain the qualification involved.

For some, money was not a major problem. They could rely on their parents for support and they were sufficiently motivated by the prospect of qualifications and better job opportunities to make certain financial sacrifices in the short-term.

It didn't really bother me because all I wanted was a trade, or something that would get me, that would make it easier for me to get a job. The money didn't bother me if I could get it off my father or someone.

I am a full-time adult student. I have my parents behind me, financially and everything, but they say they see to me in vacations. I do lose out financially but when I have my parents, I don't really miss it.

For another student, parental support was important, but so was the grant which he received from the education authority and the money which he was able to earn at the weekend.

I haven't got any hassles with money so far. I am still living at home with Mum and Dad and I've got a little Saturday job. That helps me to get by. Also I get grants, something like the second highest amount you get awarded which is something like £143 a term. It isn't a lot but it is enough to get by. Living at home there is less pressure. I don't have to worry about where the bread's going to come from, the electric bill and things like that.

The two students on access courses both received full awards. These were formally discretionary awards, but it was the policy of the local authority to give them automatically to anyone who was accepted for the course. This was regarded by both students as an important factor in enabling them to undertake the course. They were asked specifically what would have happened if these awards had not been available.

I couldn't do it. It's a full-time, daytime course. I have to have some finances from somewhere—turning to crime.

The only other possibility if you are doing that course would be that you would have to do it in the evening and I think the evening course takes a much longer time.

For others, whose parents were unable or unwilling to give them support and whose local authorities were not so generous, the situation could become very demoralising. Also, finding part-time work was not necessarily a satisfactory solution.

I go to a college in one of the stingiest boroughs going. The most any student gets there is a travel grant of £32 a term. If you are living with your parents you just won't get anything else. Most students from our college either work on a Saturday in McDonalds and then work during the week as well, in the evenings. By the end of the year most of them are kicked out anyway because they can't keep up with the work.

I do a full-time course, you get no grant except for travel expenses, you have to work on a Saturday and in the evenings.

How do you think that affects your work on the course?

By the end of the first year you can get really fed up because you haven't got any money and you have to pay for all your books and everything. You lose interest.

Finally, financial considerations had a bearing on the students' choice of college. In some local authorities, the policy on travel expenses was pressurising students to enrol in the college nearest to their home.

3. Information available about further education before entry

The students at the seminar were in general critical of the information which they had received before embarking on their courses. They were particularly dismissive of the careers advice which they had received at school, the most common complaints being that it had ignored their wishes as individuals and treated them as stereotypes. Specifically with regard to FE courses, most thought that there had been insufficient information available beforehand. However, there were certain exceptions to this predominantly unsatisfactory picture and signs that the situation might be improving.

Stereotyped careers advice

Numerous participants spoke bitterly of careers advisers ignoring their expressed wishes and attempting to tell what they should be doing.

The ideas they were telling you could be totally different from what you wanted to do. They wrote off a little report about you afterwards and it was totally useless. They didn't listen to what anybody really wanted to do. They just listened to what they thought was good for you.

I went to my careers office at school, which was literally like two loos knocked together. I was told that the nursing profession is the right profession for me. I had the same thing as . . ., that computer thing. But the cheek was that they made us pay for it—£48. They said it was compulsory. I was told I should be a nurse and I said I didn't want to nurse or anything like and they said, 'So'. I have got thick files like that at home about being a nurse. She has given me regional leaflets about becoming a nurse in Scotland and I just thought, 'This is ridiculous. It's not me, it's not what I want to do'. She wasn't listening to me. She was convinced that I should be what that little read-out said I should be.

Some spoke specifically of the difficulty which they had in relating to the careers staff.

When I was at school about five years ago now, the careers officers used to come to your schools. All these white middle-class, middle-aged guys, with bald heads. You couldn't relate to them in any way and you thought, 'I don't think this person knows what I want to do'. I don't think the careers officers can relate.

Another participant was prepared to concede that careers officers could be helpful, but only under very limited circumstances.

With careers, what I find is that the careers officers are helpful to you only if you definitely know what you want to do. If you are not sure or looking for various avenues to explore they will look at you and say, 'Yes, he's black, a carpenter' or whatever, and push you in that direction, rather than opening up all the possibilities that there are.

Many of the participants felt that the advice which was thrust upon them reflected racial, and in some cases also sexual, stereotypes, and was based on unduly low expectations of their capacities.

I remember when we were going to see this second interviewer there was two mates of mine, both black as well, and somehow we went in one after the other. We waited outside for each other. We thought, 'He's going to be shocked, three black girls at the same time. Let's wait and see what happens'. When I said what I wanted to do you could see his eye light up a little. 'Ah!' you know. Janet said to me, she came out and she said, 'Yeah, he really looked surprised when I went in. It was so obvious, another black person as well as being female'. You could feel that definite attitude. They also asked how many 'O' levels are you likely to get. My friend told nine. 'Nine! Oh, really', as if it was something completely surprising that a black person, a black woman, could get nine 'O' levels at one go.

I always wanted to be an architect and when I came over from Jamaica I went straight to the careers people and I said, 'I would like to do an architect's course'. He sort of said, 'Why?' and I said, 'I have always wanted to be an architect etc'. 'Why don't you try something like surveying or somewhere else, because it's a really hard course to get onto and this, that and the other?' He tried to direct me elsewhere. I persisted and went on, even though I didn't finish it—so he was probably right, but still . . .

When you are black and you go to careers office to get information and you say, 'I want to be an executive or Prime Minister' they look upon you as if being black you are trying to work up to a standard which you shouldn't reach. If it is a cleaning job they say, 'Yes, that suits you'.

Obviously some of these quotations exaggerate the point, but nevertheless it was strongly felt by many of the participants, both Asian and Afro-Caribbean.

Lack of information about FE

Criticism was also expressed about the lack of information which was available beforehand specifically relating to FE college.

Hardly anybody knew what FE college was like. People who went, went by pot luck, because it was different.

Participants felt that they had not known what they were letting themselves in for, and that they had not been told enough about their courses and how they were to be assessed. Once again the careers service were criticised.

Are there things you could be told before you started the course that would have helped?

Course structures and what the course involved. If you have made a choice on a particular course and you are made fully aware of what the course entails and how much of your life will be devoted to it.

Who should be telling you that?

I would have thought the careers.

In addition, schools were seen as having a vested interest in withholding information and some students felt that they were being used in a 'numbers game'.

If you come straight out of school they don't really bother about it, about FE colleges, because they are trying to get you to stay on. They try to persuade you.

However, there was one participant who was satisfied that he knew all about his course beforehand, though even he was not completely satisfied.

I knew what course I was going to do because I researched it and got all the information from careers advisers and teachers at the sixth form colleges. The teachers helped me most on choosing the course and what sort of subjects I should take. I am doing a business studies course. I know a lot about it. The only thing I did not know about was the exams, what we are expected to do. This was the same with my friends. In the first year we weren't even told when the exams were coming and how important they were. They don't say, 'If you don't pass these exams you won't get to the second year'. That is what most of us fail on. We needed to push harder because we weren't told.

Clearly for most of the participants, the formal sources of information about further education had not proved to be satisfactory. In some cases this had reduced the process of decision making to a matter of pot luck. In other cases, the participants had been able to draw on more informal sources, such as the word-of-mouth reputations passed on by friends.

Black disadvantage?

The question arose as to whether members of the black community were at a particular disadvantage with regard to the inadequacy of the information available. In answer, one of the participants drew attention to the problems of those for whom English is a second language.

To tell you the truth I think it is hard for people whose second language is English. People who do not speak English fluently, or it's their second language, they are passed off usually as if they don't know what they're talking about. Just because they can't speak English fluently they think they don't really know what they want to do. I think they find it hardest.

It was also pointed out that the problem for the black community was not just the lack of information, but its selectivity.

The point you made earlier about do you think that black students get less information than white students, I tend to agree with you. It is not less information, it is more selective information, in terms of 'This would be a good course for black students to go on'. It is 'This is very much a stereotyped course for black students to go on so we'll send all the information to this school'. The example I can think of straight off is the two-year 'O' level. This is very much all Asian students in the same classroom, where a lot of Asian people live. The schools round there tend to get a lot of the information on 'O' level courses and the catering, the hairdressing and that sort of thing goes towards the county, out of the city colleges. In terms of information overall there is a lack of it in what I would call black areas.

Signs of improvement

There was certain evidence of more positive developments beginning to take place. In the case of the two students who were on access courses, the college appeared to have made a particular effort to promote its provision in the local community.

In my town there is a Workshop Centre, like a youth club. In there last year all these posters started to appear and they are there again now—'Going into further education? Come and see the officer'. This was at the youth club. I went along and saw him. I knew him. We just had a talk and he thinks I have potential, he thinks I've got a brain and I can use it and I should go for it. That is one reason I went into it at the beginning.

Also it was mentioned that one of the colleges involved was considering producing publicity material in languages other than English, and that some colleges in London were beginning to use the ethnic minority press to advertise their courses. These were seen as being steps in the right direction.

4. General experience of further education

When the participants were asked about their first impressions and general experience as black students in further education, the discussion focused on the issue of informal segregation. Most of the participants attended colleges at which there were significant proportions of black students. Few of them felt particularly unwelcome when they first arrived at college, but they tended to congregate in 'safe groups' which often reflected racial distinctions. As a result, a kind of informal racial segregation took place which was particularly noticeable in the use of leisure facilities.

The extent to which the participants felt comfortable when they first started college varied. The racial make-up of the student population had some bearing on this, but it also depended on the extent to which the individual student was already used to the situation they were coming into.

I felt more relaxed because I'd done some part-time work there and I was familiar with the surroundings.

Our college has no problems at all, not from what I saw. When I first started my course in the class I went to, they were all Asians and blacks and only one white girl. There was no problem and she didn't have any problems because she fitted in. Most of her friends are Asians.

About people relating to colleges. It depends on the background. If you come from a mainly black area and go into an all-white college you will probably feel more intimidated by that than you would if you were a black person living in an all-white area and already exposed to that. You fit in more easily.

The reaction of those who felt less at ease was to group together for security.

The first time I went to college I saw a lot of white people. There were about five or six of us and we felt left out. We didn't know anyone in the college, so we started the Asian Society and got all the Asians together and that is the way we got together, to know each other.

One of the participants questioned the role of such societies and the following exchange took place.

I think it's a good idea to get to know everybody of your own race but don't you think that leads to sectioning off? You have all these societies, Afro-Caribbean, Asian, instead of everybody trying to unite under the banner of the college. Everybody is splitting into these little sections.

You made reference to Asian societies and Afro-Caribbean societies. The reason for societies like the Asian Society and the Afro-Caribbean Society being set up within our college is that we have a large population of Asian and Afro-Caribbean students. These societies were not set up to be separate societies. The main aims of them is so that these groups could establish some sort of relationship with the white students within the college, to share cultural experiences, for example, West Indian food and music, Asian food and music. That is the main reason for setting up the societies.

Whatever the role played by formal societies, the participants gave clear evidence of a more informal kind of segregation taking place in their colleges. This was usually most obvious in the use of facilities such as common rooms and canteens. It was sometimes emphasised by black and white students tending to do different kinds of courses and to be located on different sites.

In our particular college last year we had some police cadets. Our college has a canteen sectioned off into two areas. The Asians and other FE students and the 'O' level students sat in one part and the cadets sat on the other. Even though there were racist remarks there was still some tension and yet the cadets are supposed to be the people, when they go over to the full-time job, who will be holding the peace. There shouldn't be any racism there.

This happens a lot at colleges, things like common rooms, canteens. Common rooms are even worse. There's a black common room and a white common room there. You used to get a line where you run around the white common room.

At our college we have one common room which is definitely black-dominated, and male-domianted. We have three sites and it is as if the sites themselves are sectioned. One is very black and Asian, another seems very white and the other seems very mixed.

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. . . when we get to the canteen we see only white people so blacks and Asians think of going into the common room.

• • •

They (the black students) *congregate in the library at our place.*

• • •

The majority of students in our college are probably white. The white students seem to either come on day release courses from work or on engineering courses and the Asian and black students tend to be on general education courses. They seem to be in college more. So you know the common room. A lot of the white students don't even know is there because they are day release students.

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Also with our college we have a lot of day release and YTS students, mainly white, who are singled out because mostly all the black students come from one area and knew each other before. The white students who are singled out do not feel at home when they are around the common room. That is why they do not hang around.

It was also noted by one of the observers that the black students tended to know each other better beforehand, coming from a more close-knit community. But the most important underlying factor seemed to be the need for security.

It (the common room) *could be somewhere that perhaps people feel safe. Our college is quite a big place. You can go anywhere and get into all kinds of things but the common room, like it belongs to the blacks and you can go in there and be your own thing.*

The Chairperson summed up this part of the discussion as follows.

It sounds to me as if what we are saying, people are saying that little safe groups of you are formed, whether in the common room or the library. You are identifying with each other and staying together because that way you feel supported.

5. Teaching and staff

The participants were asked about the teaching they received at college and whether they felt that it discriminated against them in any way as black students. They were also asked about college staff in general and whether they thought that there was a need to have more black staff.

Teaching and curricula

A number of general complaints were made by the participants about the way in which they were taught.

Some teachers use posh words that nobody can understand. They use jargon. They have to bring the language down sometimes.

Our lecturers come in, give the lecture, do not care if you take notes or not, and move out. That is it.

When I was at another college the lecturer at first, to begin with I thought he was a fantastic lecturer. All the essays I handed in I was getting As and Bs. He said, 'Don't worry, you're going to pass the lot with flying colours'. So I done the exam and got F.

No serious allegations were made about discrimination, but a number of examples were given of what the participants certainly regarded as insensitivity. These included the argument which one of the participants had with his lecturers over the word 'ethnic' (see above, 1. The Title of the Seminar) and also the incident which is described as follows.

I think some teachers they are saying, 'Yes, we know about all these policies' but they are still teaching as if the class is white dominated. As I said before, our drama teacher is doing 19th century music hall and she said, 'Oh, your grandparents will know these music hall songs'. I mean, come on, I'm not going on the plane and going to Jamaica to ask Granny, 'Do you know this song?' When I said to her she said, 'Oh, I'm not racist' and things like that. In her heart, she says she's not racist, but she comes out with these little things that only black people pick up. I remember, one white girl said, 'Oh, you're making too much of a thing about it, the other students didn't see this'. But I saw it. They said 'You're over-reacting', but is it? You ask to be taught on a basis and then they bring such a stupid comment in. She didn't mean to, of course, but it was still there.

There were also complaints about the content of some of the courses being taught. History and literature were the main subject areas mentioned. The complaints were extended from courses in colleges to include also those taught in schools.

I have done history lessons at an FE college and at school. The history lessons comprise being told about the slave trade and the abolition of the slave trade. After that we don't hear nothing else. We go into further education from school wondering what has happened after the abolition of the slave trade and don't hear about it again. After I left school I didn't know if any great black men existed. We weren't told about any at school. That is something that should be changed.

* * *

Particularly at school, the only way you can find out about your own culture is to go your own way and find out outside school hours. Inside school they know nothing about it. It is like the African continent did not exist.

We were all supposed to run around in trees.

Changes were suggested by one of the participants.

The history we do, we are lucky in that we are not doing European history but Russian and American. How about doing history of some African countries or West Indian countries or Asian countries, Far Eastern countries and things like that? Then there is literature. Do more literature that is not by white English authors, male dominated. In sociology they are starting to study the feminist perspective but they are still being laughed at a little. Things like that.

At one college, some of these kinds of changes had been made. However, it seemed that there was a danger of them being used in a tokenistic way which could lead to the development of a separate black curriculum instead of a multicultural mainstream curriculum for all students.

They have changed that now. They have this English course at Kingsway where there are two options and one of them is Afro-Caribbean, African writers. Some of the other students, when I was arguing about the drama thing, they used it as if, they said, 'We've got these. If you want to learn about other black people you should go on this course' as if this was enough. That is the way they treat you, we've got so much, it's enough. 'What more do you want?'.

Black staff

Although most of the participants came from colleges with sizeable proportions of black students, they reported that there were very few black staff employed in teaching positions. Where there were larger numbers of black staff, the vast majority were non-teaching staff and in positions of little authority.

There should be but if you go to the college where we are, there are so many black students there yet there is not one black member of (teaching) *staff at the moment. I don't know whether it is because they can't find them for the subjects being taught there.*

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The majority of staff at our college who are black and Asian are the technicians and the people who push trolleys around the college. I think that there is only one black lecturer at our college and he does engineering.

It was also noted that, when posts were specially created which employed members of the black community, they tended to be given a lower status.

We have three community workers and all three are black. The problem is that the community workers are seen as inferior to teachers and lecturers. So when black people are given jobs, you hear that they are community workers and you think, 'Yeah, that is really good' in relation to lecturers they are still seen as inferior—not by the students because the students get on better with them than with the lecturers, by the lecturing staff.

The participants were asked why it should be important to have black people in positions of authority in colleges. One response suggested that it would be easier for them to relate to the students of their own colour. Another point made was that black students needed to see other black people in positions of authority if they were not to become discouraged.

If you have a place where most of the people in high authority are white you start thinking, 'Why am I doing this? I'm not going to get anywhere. You have to be white to get anywhere.'

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It is more important that we see black people in positions of power that we can relate to rather than cleaners. When I was at the poly the only black people I ever saw were the cleaning staff.

The lack of black staff in positions of authority was seen as having an impact on the whole ethos and culture of colleges. Although the majority, or a large proportion, of the students might be from Asian and Afro-Caribbean backgrounds, this was rarely reflected in the way that a college was run. The food served in the canteen was a particular point of issue.

At our college in the kitchen you have got maybe one or two black or Asian workers. The majority is black and Asian in the college as a whole. On the teaching staff there are only four black or Asian lecturers and there again the majority are black and Asian students. Therefore the food they are cooking in there does not appeal to us most of the time. The food is a load of junk really, basically, coming from our background and environment. You might get a token day, with rice or a couple of samosas and that is it. The rest of it is burgers and mash. We don't really deal with that. If you are catering for the people who are there, cater with the right food and things like that.

In answer, one of the participants made the opposite point that they did not want particular kinds of foods imposed upon them just because they were black.

I don't think it's fair really to say that if you have got a majority that are black that you should have certain food and things. There might not be that many black people or Asians who, because they go to college, want samosas, chapati or curry. You might want burgers and mash or chips. You might get to the situation where people will provide these things just because you are black.

However, it was clear that many of the students did want change.

The feedback at our college is 'Chips, chips, every day'. The people at our college generally they want something different.

The Asian Society just carried out a survey on the refectory system and some of the responses we have been getting show they want a change, especially with food. They don't cater for tastes at all, especially for vegetarians.

The participants were also questioned about the employment of reception and security staff. Those who responded were against special efforts being made to employ black staff in these areas.

I do not know if you necessarily need black, Asian security men. We have two security men at our college who are white and they seem to get on with everybody. It needs somebody who is sympathetic, black or white or Asian. I do not think you need to plant people there specifically to take account of the majority in the college, black or Asian. You need someone who is sympathetic to people's culture and background. I don't think you need a black face.

And you feel that white staff can do that?

I don't think that necessarily all of them could do that. There are racists but not everybody is racist. Not everybody is unsympathetic to black people and to Asian people's needs.

I agree with that. What happens is that they employ one black person and they say, 'Okay. You are the black employee'. That is as far as it goes. That's not a clever situation. It leads to tokenism. It won't improve anything. You need to educate the people there.

Although perhaps not in the case of security staff, the lack of black staff in positions of authority was generally perceived as being a significant problem. However, there was no real agreement as to what could be done about the situation. One of the observers made the case for a policy of positive discrimination, but some of the students were wary of this. As well as the fear of tokenism, concern was expressed that this might be perceived as a reverse form of racism.

In the FE colleges the administration and the lecturers might feel that there isn't any racism going on there and they don't think that they ought to do things like that. Talking about having black lecturers, don't you think we are reversing the tables and being racist ourselves in saying that we should have more black people?

Others were concerned about what would happen to those black people who were put in positions of authority and questioned whether they would retain their links with the rest of the black community.

You have to be wary if you are to encourage black people to want high posts. If we can manage to get a black person to hold a high position we have to be sure that the person is willing to work for the benefit of black people. What always seems to happen, in Birmingham there are one or two black politicians and they have been taken as the spokespersons for the black community but they always seem to be holding the rest of that community back.

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Can I just add on your point, if black people are to get anywhere in society it is not that they have to but they seem to change from where they started off, with the masses of the black people. Going through the system and everything, it seems as if you can't get anywhere unless you take on white characteristics. That is why, when they finally get up there, they don't seem to reflect what their communities want them to do, because they are seeing it from the viewpoint of the people with the most authority, the white people. The problem is trying to stay the same between when you are at the bottom and trying to get to the top.

This is a problem because when you get to the top, as a black person you have even more problems to keep your head above water when you are up there. People have really got to mingle in and play the Uncle Tom when they get up there to these heights.

The Chairperson questioned whether this was just a matter of numbers and suggested that, if more black people were in positions of authority, the pressure on any individual to become 'white' might be reduced.

The students, however, appeared to be sceptical. As things were at the moment, they did not think that it was possible for a black person to get on without compromising their cultural identity.

At the end of the day it's important when you get to the top, it's much harder for the black person at the top than it is for a white person. A lot of white people resent that fact. They make it as difficult as possible for that person to be even a lecturer who is just an L1. There will be lots of staff who are white and who stir it up for that black lecturer. It becomes more and more difficult for that person to stay black. You're put into a position of choosing. We spoke earlier about the divide and rule position—where do you go, who do you go with? Do you toe the line with your white staff or do you go with the community where your heart really is?

6. Racism and anti-racist policy

Racism was an underlying theme in relation to most of the topic areas covered by the discussion. Also, the questionnaire that was filled out during the morning asked the participants if their colleges had either anti-racist or multicultural policies. It will be remembered that half of them said that their colleges had such policies, six said that they did not and two did not know.

The discussion on this topic focused on the difficulties associated with the development and implementation of anti-racist policies in particular.

The first problem seemed to be the negotiation of the bureaucratic obstructions which could be used by those who were not committed to such a policy.

Can I give you the example of my college? The directive didn't come from the college but from the County Council. It was quite funny really. It then went to our academic board who were asked to get a policy together. It was said that the multicultural and equal opportunities committee could do the policy and then come back to the board for formal approval. So they sent it to the multicultural and equal opportunities committee to do the policy. That committee, because it has a number of black people, put certain words in. The policy then went back to the board and the board, because it's all white people, threw it out because it was too strong. It went back to multi-cultural and equal opportunities, so it has taken a year for that policy not to get anywhere. All it is is a very bureaucratic way of saying, 'We'll miss another year of enrolment without it being in the prospectus'. They are just playing the system, saying that, 'This is not on' and sending it back. This is basically because all the people on the academic board are heads of departments, the principal and vice-principal, those sort of people, and they don't really want to see it. They are not committed to the idea. The only reason why they are doing it is that they have been instructed by their employers. Now they are just stalling. We haven't got a policy.

Even when a college had adopted a policy, the students were extremely sceptical as to whether it made any difference. In the first place there was the problem of publicising it. The policy had to be known about and understood if it was to have any effect. It was suggested that leaflets could be distributed and also that student unions should be more closely involved in the development and dissemination of policies. However, there was still the problem of getting people to take notice of the policy and having it enforced. The participants were anything but optimistic.

Does anybody really notice it? It is all right saying that we have this policy but what something says on paper and what happens in reality are two different things. It is all right saying that they've got this policy, here, there and everywhere, but when you try to point out that this has happened, this incident, you have to go through so many pipelines, you are shunted here, there and there, it makes people wonder whether it is worth it. They might just as well have kept their mouths shut.

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The problem is not the people who want to read it, it's the people who don't want to know. A leaflet will not take racism out.

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It is all right to have bits of paper but what things say on paper—who takes notice of them? Pieces of paper don't change a person's attitude. If a person is racist he will not look at an anti-racist policy and say, 'Oh dear, I mustn't be racist any more'.

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. . . Enforcement is the problem. There are colleges with supposedly anti-racist policies that don't do anything about them.

An example was given of what was regarded as the ineffectiveness of college policy.

At our college last year we had a problem. We had students bringing in cassette recorders and we had a complaint from one lecturer referring to reggae music as jungle music. A letter of complaint was sent to the head of department and to the academic board and to the head of the college. The lecturer who made the statement was questioned. His answer was that the reason he referred to the music as jungle music was that it was loud. When asked if he would consider something like Beethoven played excessively loudly as jungle music he said yes. You cannot really win in those circumstances.

It was also pointed out that policies could do little to counter an unspoken form of institutionalised racism.

I think the policy you are advocating there is just scratching the surface. The problem is the people that actually think racist and it becomes institutionalised and it prevents you getting a job. They won't call you a black whatsit but they will think it.

The students were in general equally sceptical about the role of the law in this area and the extent to which the CRE could help them. In many instances, they thought that discrimination was simply impossible to prove.

If you go to a job interview and don't get it is that racist? You say, 'That's life'.

The students from one college were able to give an instance of when they had found the backing of the law useful. However, in a sense, this had depended on their taking the law into their own hands.

Has anyone ever successfully challenged something that they believed was anti-racist by using the law?

Yes, the Christmas disco. We hired a hall in town. Me and . . . went down town and he said, 'Sorry, no blacks'. We press on and say that we are members of the college but he says, "Sorry, you can't go in, no blacks". After a lot of hassle we get in, because we made a lot of noise, but quite a few other black people didn't get in. Quite a few in turbans. What we did was we wrote a letter to the union and said that we were stopping the cheque to pay for the hall, £300 odd. You have to take direct action.

Then they threatened to take us to court and we told our solicitor to write back saying, 'Take us to court'. Since then we haven't heard and that was two months ago. I don't think they are taking us to court.

The participants were asked if there was anything which could be done to make college policies more effective and to improve their enforcement. Some scope was seen for improving complaints and disciplinary procedures, in order to make them less bureaucratic and more in the interests of the students.

We should be looking at setting up disciplinary procedures that have the interests of the student at heart rather than the interests of the establishment. It is important that there should be someone who is basically involved with taking a complaint and seeing it through with the minimum amount of time.

Beyond this, the only real solution was seen to lie in a long-term educational process.

We have to take people from both sides and educate racism out of the system.

7. Student unions

The discussion focused on both the role of individual student unions in colleges and that of NUS nationally.

College student unions

It will be remembered that a number of participants were involved in their student unions as elected representatives and executive officers. The Chairperson asked first for the views of those who were ordinary students without such direct involvement.

Their responses indicated that there was sometimes a communication gap between the union and ordinary students.

The students still see the union as something that is up there and not part of them. They do not realise that it is everyone in the college that goes together to make up that union.

The situation was seen as being made worse by the formal committee procedures adopted at meetings, though it was also pointed out that it could be useful as a student to learn about these.

All of the participants were asked what role they thought student unions could play in tackling the problems which had been raised in the earlier part of the discussion. The responses given were not particularly positive.

The problem is that the administrators of the college will start putting onto the student union things that they should be dealing with. They will say, 'Oh, this is a matter for the student union' when it really is a matter for them to tackle. The student union might be able to help them but primarily it is for them, it is their problem. It is good that the student union can be a mediator between students and administrators but sometimes administrators depend too heavily and put so many problems on student unions that the student union just shouldn't have on its plate.

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It takes time because it has to go to the governors and that is where we get swamped in red tape. We cannot get anything done because of that. We have to go to the upper section of college management. The union, in all colleges I think, does not have that much power. It cannot just go to the principal and say, 'We want this doing tomorrow'. They will put it off and say, 'Bring it to the governors and see what they say'. The union's hands are tied. It cannot do anything apart from consulting others.

The role of societies, such as Afro-Caribbean and Asian Societies, was also discussed. They were seen as being primarily social societies, organising events such as discos. However, it was argued that they should be going beyond this role and assisting the student unions in taking up issues. The Asian Society which had carried out a survey of students' attitudes to the canteen was seen as being an example of what might be done.

Many of the participants were critical of NUS. The focus of their criticisms was on the gap which they saw as existing between policy and practice.

. . . the NUS had an anti-racist and anti-sexist meeting to formulate NUS policy. People at union level can sit down and say all these great things around the table but when you come down to it there is still discrimination against Indians at college and things like that. There is a gulf between what is happening and what the union is saying.

More specific criticisms were made of the training events which NUS runs for student union officers.

I have attended a number of training courses, regionally and NUS level. Within that, higher education student unions, who are far more organised, are always talking about anti-racism, anti-sexism and the rest of it. But when there is regional training there never tends to be racial awareness training before a course. On a number of occasions I have discovered that there is a lot of racism within student union officers themselves when attending training courses. It is apparent to me from the racist and sexist language that they use in training. The number of jokes that come out, and that sort of thing. NUS hasn't gripped itself in terms of how it trains its officers. Surely that should be a feed downwards to student councils and societies and that sort of thing. I don't think we have done that. We have always recommended that there should be race awareness, multicultural training for staff members in colleges, but we have never said that, or certainly it is not apparent in terms of student union training. Should we be looking at that as well as part of the brief of union officers?

Concern was also expressed about the lack of direct representation of black students on the political executive of NUS and it was asked how many black staff NUS employed. The answer, given by an NUS staff member, was three—out of a total of approximately seventy. One of the participants commented as follows on the need for change.

Maybe we should start with the NUS before anyone else.

The discussion concerning what should be done about NUS took place under the topic heading of 'Suggested Improvements'.

8. Impact of further education on individuals

At an earlier point in the discussion, one of the participants had recalled the conversation which he had had with his lecturer at the outset of his course.

He did say one true thing, this happened to some people more than others. He said, 'By the time you finish this course you will be a changed person'. I think that is probably true. Going to FE college really changes your life . . .

Other participants were asked to comment upon how they had been affected by going to college.

For one Afro-Caribbean student, the experience had not changed his fundamental outlook on life, but it had changed the way he organised his life and what he thought about. It had also given him an opportunity to meet different people.

It has not changed my outlook on life. The way you have to organise life, it changes that. A lot. It makes you realise things. It brings you into contact with a lot of other people, which is good. I would never meet so many white people normally. I would not meet so many Asian people or anybody else. Meeting people is important. The whole learning process also. It does not affect your thought patterns, it affects your thinking.

For another student, the important thing was meeting other black students like herself who wanted to gain qualifications and get on, despite all the disadvantages of living in a racist society.

The positive side of me being at college is meeting other black people. At my old school many of the people I knew wanted either to go to . . . and find a man and things like that. They saw me as totally alien because I wanted to get qualifications. Coming to college and mixing with people with the same ideas, who know that to get anywhere in society you have to get as many pieces of paper as possible and flash them in their faces, it introduced me to others. I was getting cynical about black people in general. On the media all you were ever hearing was that black people were rioting. You start thinking, the way that society kept showing you black people in these low positions, you think, 'I am not going to get anywhere'. But going to college and seeing that there are so many black people out to get something in this white, racist society, it has bucked me up again.

This raised once again the question of the value of qualifications to the students. One of the participants summed up both their importance and their limitations for young blacks attempting to compete against discrimination.

(They provide) *a bit more ammunition . . . There is so much discrimination at least we'll have something. It won't solve it.*

9. Suggested improvements

Towards the end of the discussion, the participants were asked to concentrate on what could be done to improve the experience of black students at college. The responses fell into three main categories: better communications between colleges and the community; more input from students in the management of colleges; and improved black representation within NUS itself.

College/community communications

Although it was recognised that colleges were making efforts to establish closer links with the community, the view was expressed that so far these efforts had been superficial and that more needed to be done.

I think a lot of the wording and the language structure could be worked out. A lot of people who have been on certain courses like this access course, they don't go into the community and see what people think. They wait until the problem comes to the front door and when they are confronted they tend to take a back step. They have to go out and do some more research.

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A lot of these courses, the person in charge of the course actually came round and did a bit of research but he just sprinkled around a few areas. He did not go into the heart of the situation. He would go to one or two schools, out of tokenism, and get information, come away and hold a meeting somewhere else. When you get people actually attending the courses other problems arise. Although he went out into the community he didn't ask anyone else to come back in and offer anything.

Another of the participants, however, did not think that the whole onus should be on those providing the courses.

Why can't everybody meet half-way? It is unfair to say that they've got to do this. It is unfair to think that students themselves have to be the ones to bring these incidents alive. Both sides must meet somewhere in the middle and both have to work if they are to get a satisfactory conclusion.

One of the observers added that, on the basis of the students' earlier comments, there was a clear need also for the careers service's understanding of the black community to be improved.

I feel that maybe careers officers should be exposed to some of the concerns that have been expressed here. There is a need for them to undertake in-service training to understand the community and its needs.

Student input

As well as better communication with the community, it was urged that college authorities should take more note of the opinions of the student body.

We need more influence or representation on the board of governors of colleges because that is where most of the decisions are made on new courses and that. Most of the people who run it haven't a clue what is going on with the white students, let alone the black students.

That again comes back to the student union.

It is not taken that seriously. We may have two representatives on the board of governors but unless they are strong minded, they may not be taken seriously anyway. You have got people fixed in their ways.

The National Union of Students

Whilst student unions might be regarded as part of the solution, it has already been seen that many of the participants also regarded the organisation of the student movement as part of the problem. In order to understand the arguments on this subject, it is necessary to explain briefly certain facts about how NUS works.

NUS policy is made by National Conference, where motions are voted on by delegates who are elected within their college. This policy is then implemented by the National Executive which is also elected by the delegates at Conference through a ballot based on proportional representation.

The participants at the seminar were more concerned about the implementation of policies than the policies themselves. Thus, when considering improvements, the focus of attention fell on the National Executive.

In its work concerned with issues of race and anti-racism, the National Executive is advised by an Anti-Racism Committee, which in turn is elected at an Anti-Racism Conference.

As a member of the Anti-Racism Committee, the Student Chairperson took a more active part in this section of the discussion. He felt that the main problem was the lack of influence of the Anti-Racism Committee, on which black students were represented, over the National Executive, on which currently there were no black students.

Not a lot goes on because the National Executive, through its make-up, tends not to understand the reasons or justifications, or to ask for justifications difficult to give for recommendations from the Anti-Racism Committee, and generally finds some plausible reason for not going ahead. This is why I agree with what people say about changing the system and getting black people involved in the structures.

The actions of the participants varied. Some had not known beforehand about the existing structures and this lack of information amongst ordinary students was identified as a problem.

Some people don't even know that there is an Anti-Racism Committee, that there is an advisory committee. What I am asking is that the NUS and its staff should get it across to members and members of NUS in colleges and tell them. 'We have this service we offer. We would like to help you.' I have seen nothing about it.

The question was raised whether having reserved places on the National Executive would help. The Chairperson did not think so.

I don't like the idea of reserved places, of saying that there is one spot there for our black member of the National Executive and then everything that comes through that is vaguely racist is dumped on his or her desk. That doesn't change the situation. There needs to be an input from black and white students to put pressure on the National Executive to respond. We should not be talking about setting up our own structure within NUS but forcing NUS to respond, not just to us but to other groups.

One of the participants challenged this view.

You are saying that more pressure should be put onto the NUS Executive concerning the welfare of the black students. I have to disagree with you there. I think that there is a need for direct representation of black students on the NUS Executive. If we can get one reserve position on the Executive I am sure that it will encourage other black students to get involved and to make a beeline towards the Executive, so that we will have more direct representation. The way I see what you are saying you are quite satisfied with white people dominating, white students, dominating the National Executive and all that we should do is to put pressure on them to look at the welfare of black students. As you can see, from past history, nothing is done about that and nothing will be done unless there is some radical change.

In response, the Chairperson denied that he was satisfied with the current position, but reasserted his view that having a token black person on the National Executive would not make any real difference. He thought that the way forward was to build on the existing black pressure groups in the student movement, such as the National Black Students Alliance, and to link these more directly into NUS structures. In general, he thought that the onus was on black students to act on their own behalf.

I think that if we want to change anything about the way in which society and structures treat us a lot of the onus rests on us to stand up and say something about what we feel, if only so that those who are trying to change opinion, and want to change opinion, can hear it.

No agreement was reached on how NUS might be improved with regard to black representation and the implementation of anti-racist policies. There remained, however, a general feeling that the need for change was urgent.

Note. It should be noted that: a) the member of the NUS National Executive who was present at the seminar had had to leave before this point of the discussion was reached; b) that since the seminar was held the Chairperson, Sam Akinlade, has himself been elected to the NUS National Executive.

10. Miscellaneous—The Youth Training Scheme

The topic heading 'Miscellaneous' within the Chairperson's brief was intended to provide the opportunity for the participants to comment upon any aspect of their experience of FE which had not been covered elsewhere in the brief. Nothing came up directly in this way, but there was one area of experience which by its nature stood apart slightly from the rest of the evidence. This was the Youth Training Scheme (YTS).

Of the sixteen participants, two were currently YTS trainees attending a college-based training workshop. In addition, at least one other participant had previously had some experience of YTS.

The two current YTS trainees said very little throughout the afternoon, despite the efforts of the Chairperson to involve them in the discussion.

It was clear from the outset of the seminar during the morning that they felt inhibited about talking of their experiences as YTS trainees. When they were asked informally about being YTS trainees, the immediate reaction of one of them was to put his finger to his lip. He was reluctant for it even to be known that he was on YTS.

The reason for this attitude does not appear to have related directly to the experience of the two trainees on their scheme. In so far as it was possible to tell from what was said during the discussion, they seemed to be reasonably satisfied with their training. One of them at least regarded it as being more useful than school.

I thought it was just you go there, you learn what you learn and you go out and find a job. It isn't. You go out there, and you learn more skills than you would at school. At school the teacher would set you something to do and the class would do the same thing and it was who comes out best. But in there you make something, if it comes out good it is not to their satisfaction, it is to your own satisfaction. You learn from what you make and your mistakes.

The reason for the trainees' reluctance to speak appeared to be their apprehension about the other participants' attitudes towards YTS. They sensed that the FE students on regular courses would tend to look down on YTS as an inferior form of provision. Given what the other participants had to say about YTS, this would seem to have been a largely accurate perception.

One of the other participants had started off in an ordinary job after leaving school and had then been forced by his employer to become a YTS trainee or else lose the job altogether. This meant accepting a training allowance that was lower than his original wage. Instead, he chose to enrol on a college course, even though this meant a further financial loss. He explained this preference as follows.

The job was boring. I prefer college because I had more time for myself and I would have learned qualifications and got a better job and earned more money.

Complaints were also made of misleading information being given about YTS schemes and pressure being placed on students to abandon college courses in favour of YTS. The comments made reveal the hostility which some of the participants felt towards YTS.

I was told that I would be working with a computer most of my time. I found most of the time I had to stick down letters and that was it.

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When you go on (a part-time course) *the leaflets come flooding through the door from the careers centre and they say, 'Come down to the Jobcentre, we haven't seen you for a long time'. I went down and a couple of days later they sent me this thing, to come to this seminar, an interview through the YTS scheme. I went down. There was just the one man interviewing me and saying, 'What are you doing at college and why did you go to this college? Why did you do 'O' and 'A' levels? Why do you want to do these 'A' levels? What do you expect to achieve?' He says, 'There is this YTS course' and I said, 'I want to do 'A' levels and I'm not going to do YTS. You can shove your YTS . . . I don't want to do YTS'. I really sort of slagged him off and told him about his YTS course because I didn't want to do it.*

In conclusion, the seminar cannot be said to have revealed much about the situation of black young people on YTS, but it did indicate that there was a significant gap between the experiences and perceptions of some YTS trainees and those of their peers who preferred mainstream further education.

CONCLUSION

The experience that was recorded at this seminar was not for the most part of a nature that made it possible to draw it together into simple conclusions leading to straightforward recommendations. The nearest that can be approached to a formal conclusion is to give an impression of what appeared to be the most important messages emerging from the discussion.

The debate which took place at the beginning of the discussion concerning the title of the seminar called into question the whole validity of the event. It indicated that it was more problematical to bring together a mixed group of Asian and Afro-Caribbean students in order to document a collective 'black' experience than perhaps had originally been anticipated. Nevertheless, what the participants said subsequently did show that there was a substantial area of common experience, however it might be described. Whilst making it clear that both Asian and Afro-Caribbean students were involved, the description 'black' has been retained simply because there does not appear to be any other more acceptable collective term.

The most important positive message of the seminar concerned the potential of further education to transform the lives of black young people and to help them to fight their way forward in a racist society. College could provide an emancipation from previous school experience, both in terms of being treated as an adult and being offered equal opportunities. It could also provide the qualifications necessary to compete in the society beyond. Qualifications could not offer a way round racial prejudice, but they could be used as a weapon in an individual's fight to overcome it.

Against this positive potential must be set certain problems which emerged. The first of these concerned the inadequacy and stereotyped nature of the information and careers advice which the students received before entering further education. Whilst further education might be able to offer important opportunities to black young people, it seemed often to be a matter of pot luck whether they would be made aware of these opportunities. The standard institutional sources of information and advice seemed to have let most of the participants down, and the only positive signs seemed to be where special efforts had been made to bring the information to the black community.

In addition to lack of information, there were other factors which might block access to the opportunities offered by further education. Some indication was given of the dependence of the students' aspirations on both/either the backing of their parents and/or public financial support.

Looking specifically from the angle of public policy, it needs to be taken into account that the level and coverage of the general provision of financial support for students in further education may have particularly important implications for those black young people for whom the obtaining of qualifications at college is their best hope of fighting the disadvantages that they face in a racially prejudiced society. In short, the inadequacy of current arrangements for student financial support in the further education sector could be having a disproportionately negative impact on the aspirations of black young people.

The problems were by no means over once the student arrived at college. Whilst college might have the potential to provide a form of emancipation, it was by no means immune from the prejudices and divisions of the wider society.

This was reflected in a number of ways: by the tendency of the black students to form 'safe' groups with other members of their own race; by the monopoly of positions of authority within the college by white members of staff; by the insufficient account taken of the multicultural nature of society in the curriculum and in teaching; and by the bureaucratic stifling and general ineffectiveness of college policies designed to counter racism.

Most of the participants at the seminar came from colleges which were run by white staff but at which there were considerable numbers of black students. In such circumstances, the role of the student union is representing the student interest within the college could be assumed to take on a special importance. However, from what the participants said, this was rarely the case. On the one hand, there tended to be a communication gap between student unions and their ordinary individual members. On the other hand, college authorities tended not to take student unions seriously and to exclude them from having any influence over decision making. The incapacity of the student movement nationally to make effective its own anti-racism policy, as indicated by the participants' comments about NUS, added another negative factor to this unsatisfactory situation.

When looking at what could be done to improve the experience of black students within both college and student unions, the participants' views revealed an underlying scepticism. They put forward certain positive ideas for improving links between colleges and the black community, for increasing student involvement in college government, and for reforming NUS in relation to its representation of black students' interests. However, doubts were repeatedly expressed about any easy or instant solutions proposed. They had already seen that neither having the correct policy, nor placing token black representatives in positions of authority, necessarily made any difference. This did not mean that many of the participants did not want more positive measures to be taken, but there was no consensus about what would be effective. There was an awareness that only a long term educational process could really change the way that people thought.

A comparison with what the students said at the 1980 seminars organised to provide evidence for the Rampton Committee would indicate that the 1986 students' scepticism was based on realism. Thus, despite the apparent progress made in the adoption of policies over the intervening years, many of the negative experiences recorded were strikingly similar. These included, in particular, the low expectations of black pupils at school, the problems with information and career advice, and the criticisms of NUS. The participants in 1980 had also been concerned about black representatives in authority becoming divorced from their communities, and black people in general having to give up their cultural identity to make progress in a white society.

Finally, it needs to be asked what, if any, positive recommendations can be made as a result of the seminar. There were not straightforward recommendations for which an overwhelming consensus emerged. Nevertheless, the improvements that were suggested, and the seminar itself, did draw attention to one particular point. This was the importance of black students and their communities having more say in the way that colleges are run. Responsibilities are implied in three different directions: college authorities must be more open and prepared to listen; student unions need to be more effective in representing the interests of their black members; and black students themselves, and their communities, need to apply more pressure on their own behalf.

Appendix

Results of Participants' Personal Profile/Questionnaire

	Ethnic Origin*	Sex	Age	Qualifications on leaving school 'A' levels	'O' levels	CSEs	Other	Type of course	Reason for going to college	Involvement with Student Union	Does college have policy on anti-racist/ multicultural education?	Intention at end of course	Reason for attending seminar
1.	A/C	M	16					YTS (Training Workshop)	To make it easier to get a job	None	No	To look for a job.	Asked to do so.
2.	A/C	M	17					YTS (Training Workshop)	To study a trade- carpentry and electronics	None	No	To look for a job.	Asked to do so.
3.	A/C	F	21			1	RSA typing & office skills	BEC General	To advance education and expand knowledge of the business society	Elected Officer	No	To take a more advanced course — BEC National.	To share opinions with others. To see what the law can do about the oppression of black people in Britain.
4.	A/C	M	24			2		'Open College' Access Course ('A' level Contemporary Urban Issues, 'O' level English Language)	To gain access to higher education. To gain qualifications to work in a relevant field. To better himself. To help those in less fortunate situations.	Attend formal meetings	Yes	To take an advanced course in youth and community work.	To see how other groups from different areas coped with aspects of college and to get feedback about their experiences, whether negative or positive.
5.	AS	M	18		3	7		BTEC National Diploma in Business Studies	To take this particular course. Because friends were going to college.	Attend formal meetings	Yes	Hopefully, to get a job in Law or Public Administration.	Asked to attend. Interested as chairperson of college Asian Society. Wished to hear other peoples' views.
6.	AS	M	18		1	7		'O' levels	Lack of jobs available. To get qualifications for entry to higher education.	Elected Officer	Yes	Enter higher education.	Invited. Thought would be helpful. Wanted to hear other people's views. Wanted to learn about representation of ethnic minorities within college management.
7.	A/C	M	21			6		'Open College' Access Course ('O' level Law and 'O' level English Language)	To gain access to higher education. To get a job. To better himself and black people in general.	Attend formal meetings	Yes	To take an advanced course in social work (CQSW) at a polytechnic.	An opportunity to air his views. Likes to talk a lot.

*A/C—Afro-Caribbean
AS—Asian

continued over

	Ethnic Origin	Sex	Age	Qualifications on leaving school 'A' levels	'O' levels	CSEs	Other	Type of course	Reason for going to college	Involvement with Student Union	Does college have policy on anti-racist/ multi-cultural education?	Intention at end of course	Reason for attending seminar
8.	A/C	F	16		7	1		'A' levels	Bored at school and thought that it was rubbish. Wanted to meet different people	Attend formal meetings	Yes	To take a year off and then do a degree.	Out of a sense of duty to the Students Union and students in general
9.	AS	F	17		7			'A' levels (full-time)	Filling in time while waiting for a place on a beauty therapy course	Elected Officer	Yes	To become a beauty therapist	Invited by college General Secretary.
10.	A/C	M	26	1	6			'A' levels (part-time)	To gain more qualifications	Elected Officer	No	To do a degree.	To see how active the Commission for Racial Equality is.
11.	A/C	M	18		7			'A' levels	Bored at school, which was quite strict. Wanted a freer atmosphere with new people.	Elected Officer	Don't know	Go to polytechnic or get a job, depending on 'A' level grades.	Asked by Students Union and teachers. Interested in event.
12.	AS	M	17		3			Diploma in Electronic Engineering	To gain better qualifications.	Attend formal meetings.	Yes	To get a job as a technician.	Interested and wanted to know about the Commission for Racial Equality
13.	A/C	M	21		2	4		'A' levels	Because there was no work available.	Elected Officer	Yes	To look for a job.	To find out what it was about and how things were run.
14.	AS	F	17		5			'A' levels	To improve education and job prospects.	Attend formal meetings	No	Enter higher education.	To hear other people's opinions.
15.	A/C	F	20		1	7		'O' and 'A' levels	To further her education.	Elected Officer	No	To look for a job.	Interested in the Commission for Racial Equality
16.	A/C	F	16		7			'A' levels (Law, Government and English)	To gain qualifications for a career.	None	Don't know	Enter higher education.	Interested to know what the meeting was about. Concerned about the position of black people in Britain.

*A/C—Afro-Caribbean
AS—Asian

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